

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Rock Parrots Feeding on *Olearia axillaris*.—In May, 1969, a flock of Rock Parrots (*Neophena petrophila*) was sighted at William Bay, Denmark. The birds were observed through binoculars and were seen eating the seeds of *Olearia axillaris* while perched in the shrubs.

This adds another food plant to those listed by Serventy and Whittell, *Birds of Western Australia*, 4th. edn., 1967.

—PETER McMILLAN, Guildford Grammar School, Guildford.

Bridled Tern Perching on Buoys.—The Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* is a sea-inhabiting species of tern which does not frequent ocean beaches as is the habit of such species as the Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*).

Around the latitude of Mandurah I have seen Bridled Terns perched on floats and buoys, such as used for crayfish-pot markers, as close to land as about a quarter of a mile. This habit of the species is well-known to professional fisherman, Mr. L. E. Renfrey, of Mandurah, who states that individuals are often seen doing this during the summer months.

—R. H. STRANGER, Wilson.

Aerial Bathing by White-backed Swallows.—At the eastern fringe of Geraldton on 27 November, 1969 I saw a White-backed Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosternum*) swoop down, hover in the fine spray of a sprinkler watering a lawn and then fly up and rejoin the others flying above. During the next half-hour this was repeated several times, though only by one bird at any one time. The birds never landed and they always hovered with the body somewhat vertical and facing the spray.

This behaviour led me to think that they were indulging in purely aerial bathing which appears to be unrecorded from wild birds though similar behaviour has been seen in captive hummingbirds (T. Spence—pers. comm.).

Alternatively the birds may have been drinking, or combining both drinking and bathing. In any case it would almost certainly be a behavioural adaptation to an artificial source of water.

R. H. STRANGER, Wilson.

Grey Butcher-bird Feeding on *Macrozamia* Fruit.—At Lake Yangebup, on August 16, 1969, we saw a Grey Butcher-bird (*Cracticus torquatus*) with a large piece of the red rind which encases the seed of the Zamia Palm, *Macrozamia reidlet*. The bird unsuccessfully tried to wedge the rind in various forked branches but was able to pick pieces of the flesh from the skin and eat them. We interrupted the bird's feeding so that we could obtain the rind for positive identification. The flesh was comparable in firmness with a ripe pear.

A search nearby revealed a *Zamia* with seeds. Most of the seeds were bare but some had skin in the latter stages of ripeness. The flesh around these seeds varied from soft to "mushy."

On another occasion, several years ago, a group of White-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*) were seen feeding on the ground near a *Zamia*, which later examination showed, had seeds. The ground nearby was strewn with rind-encased seeds, most of which had pieces of skin and flesh bitten or ripped from them.

W. H. Loaring (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 3, 1952: 94) recorded the Western Rosella (*Platycercus icterotis*), Silvereye (*Zosterops gouldi*), and the Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) feeding on this material.

M. J. and R. H. STRANGER, Wilson.